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Commission for Social Development
Forty-sixth session
6-15 February 2008
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: promoting full employment and decent work for all

Statement submitted by Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.5/2008/1

07-61186 (E) 131207

Statement

1. The NGO Committee on Social Development conducted a survey of NGOs in 2006-07 to obtain what they consider to be effective practices in "Employment and Decent Work". The Committee received 50 responses to the Survey, representing 37 countries: 22 from Africa; 10 from Asia; 8 from South and Central America; 1 from Australia; and 5 each form Europe and North America.

2. Projects described in the 50 survey responses are illustrative of decent work and employment initiatives which can be deemed successful in empowering local communities and reducing poverty. They involve and are directed towards families, youth, women, the elderly, children, ex-soldiers, and people with disabilities, those who are mentally ill, and former prisoners.

3. The projects are focused on education, formation and training; financial planning and micro-credit; empowerment; advocacy; working conditions. Based on the data from the Survey which documents of what is happening on the ground by soliciting these stakeholders their suggestions they would make for effective policies in the area of Employment and Decent Work, the Committee has developed a summary of recommendations for Governments to assist them in their preparation for the 2008 session of the Commission for Social Development and the elaboration of lines of policy.

4. In support of the Chairman's Summary, and the Millennium Development Goals, while recognizing that economic growth cannot be the organizing principle of public policy, and having done a careful analysis of the projects submitted, and the lessons learned, we make the following recommendations to Governments:

1. **Collaborate with NGOs and participants who sponsor employment opportunities**
2. **Involve participants in initiating, planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating all projects**
3. **Ensure gender equality and promote the emerging role of women and the girl child by recognizing their unique contribution of women and children to the overall success of the project**
4. **Ensure education and participation at grass-roots level according to the interests and abilities of the participants**
5. **Supplement funding from NGOs and corporations**
6. **Guarantee funding to support, educate and train participants**
7. **Collaborate with other funding sources from civil society, corporations and foundations**
8. **Provide the necessary infrastructure, roads, water, electricity, health and sanitation services**
9. **Monitor adherence to legal frameworks for workers as articulated by ILO**
10. **Commit to supporting basic human rights as outlined in accepted human rights law**

It is our hope that Governments will transform these recommendations into policy.

Statement endorsed and supported by the following non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council: Bahá'í International Community, Citizens United for the Rehabilitation of Errants, Company of the Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul, Dominican Leadership Conference, Elizabeth Seton Federation, International Association of Charities, International Association of Schools of Social Work, International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation, Pax Romana, Salesian Missions, School Sisters of Notre Dame, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, UNANIMA International and VIVAT International.

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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: promoting full employment and decent work for all

Statement submitted by the World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.5/2008/1.

07-61204 (E) 121207

Statement

The World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations is a youth organization with 45 million members worldwide. YMCAs are working for social justice for all peoples in 124 countries.

1. Committed to empowering all, especially young people and the most vulnerable, the World Alliance of YMCAs is deeply concerned that half of the world's unemployed are under age 24. The YMCA is concerned about the high unemployment and underemployment rates among young people, the discrimination that young people face in securing decent work, and the degrading work conditions that millions of young people are subjected to in order to survive. The World Alliance of YMCAs is concerned about the double discrimination that young women face in securing decent work and is committed to advocating for the rights of girls and young women.

2. Through its work with young people in thousands of local communities, the YMCA sees the consequences of unemployment, underemployment and degrading employment including poverty, forced migration, ill health and loss of self-esteem. These factors affect not only young people themselves but their families, communities and whole nations. As such, YMCAs are continually searching for new and better ways to support young people into full employment and decent work, with a special focus on empowering the most marginalized.

3. For example, in East Jerusalem, the YMCA runs non-conventional vocational training for disadvantaged young people. The YMCA studies market demand for jobs, tailoring its training programmes accordingly. The YMCA believes in a comprehensive culture of vocational training which includes acquiring skills and training young people to be active members of their community, engaging them in policymaking and sharing the building of Palestinian civil society. In Viet Nam, the YMCA runs an entrepreneurial training scheme, which is recognized by the Department of Labour, focusing on young people from very poor families. The scheme is empowering young people with the skills to start their own businesses which not only generates work for the individuals, but provides income for whole families and is helping to regenerate local economies.

4. The World Alliance of YMCAs urges all member States to commit to drawing up and implementing a National Action Plan on Youth Employment. The United Nations Secretary-General's Youth Employment Network (a collaboration between the United Nations, the International Labour Organization and the World Bank) offers a model of good practice in this regard and offers support to member States when drawing up National Action Plans.

5. The World Alliance of YMCAs calls on member States to engage young people and youth organizations when drawing up National Action Plans. "Rather than viewing youth as a target group for which employment must be found, young people should be engaged as partners in devising solutions to a common problem."[1]

6. The World Alliance also reminds Governments that in 1995 they adopted an international strategy — the World Programme of Action for Youth — to address more effectively the challenges facing young people, and that one of the priority areas for action is employment. Governments agreed to promote opportunities for self-employment and to provide employment opportunities for specific groups of young people who are particularly vulnerable.

The World Alliance of YMCAs welcomes collaborative efforts between Governments, civil society and employers to develop practical strategies and tools for a lasting solution to promoting decent work for all young people everywhere.

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[1] "Joining Forces with Young People: A Practical Guide to Collaboration for Youth Employment", produced by the Youth Consultative Group of the Secretary-General's Youth Employment Network.

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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: promoting full employment and decent work for all

Statement submitted by To Love Children Educational Foundation International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.5/2008/1.

07-61216 (E) 131207

Statement

1. How does the world collectively take the theme of the forty-sixth session Commission "Full employment and decent work for all" and turn it into a policy that becomes an actuality for all nations? To Love Children (TLC) puts forward the idea that the emphasis should start with economic interdependence among the education and business sectors. This is necessary in order to achieve sustainable educational development in every nation. In addition, all private, government, international nongovernmental organizations, and local nongovernmental organizations need to assist the education sector in working with policy and decision-makers from all nations if we are to spawn a global economy based on sustainable educational development. Globalization both enables us to meet this challenge, as well as highlights the clashes of divergent cultures and belief systems, both political and religious in the education and economic sectors. However, if we are to achieve full employment and decent work for the entire world, we must look beyond our differences and focus on our agreement of universal education as the key to realizing this goal — building sustainable educational development opportunities for both boys and girls.

2. To Love Children has, for example, implemented a policy in our income-generating projects that sustainable education must be part of the equation. Our Poultry Project with Future Victory School- Uganda offered the opportunity for girl children to learn vocational skills in the raising and care of poultry. This program also incorporated a school-to-work program and can be replicated elsewhere in the world. To Love Children's program yielded the double benefit of teaching a career skill and bolstering educational opportunity. The profits of the sale of eggs and poultry are reinvested into sustaining the education and improved added nutrition for the children. Sustainable educational development is a foundation policy idea for economic growth and eliminating poverty. Its most critical beneficiaries include orphans: girls and boys that have been made invisible waiting for a permanent peace in the torn walls of the world.

3. Future Victory School aims to build higher standards of education by a philosophy that cuts across national and economical boundaries. The Mission of Future Victory School is: to act in compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child through sustainable education while also serving as a center for equal educational rights to ensure a whole system approach to child development, protection, survival and development of self-reliance. Education at Future Victory School is aimed at promoting local economic prosperity based on United Nations educational and ethical standards. Future Victory School's accomplishments show that the school is poised to expand its success and begin implementation of farther-reaching and effective education—economic linked programs. TLC understands that education and job-acquisition skills are the keys to a developing nation's economic security and influence. By implementing programs to unite the educational and economic sectors in combating the social, technological scientific problems facing developing economies today, TLC hopes to contribute to implementing solutions to some of the pressing issues of globalization in the 21st century.

4. To Love Children aims not only to make schools "knowledge centers" for the community but also act as a gateway bridging the gap between education, opportunity and employment. Children rendered invisible by health, physical challenges, war, local conflicts, lack of clean water, malaria, and the devastating pandemic of HIV/AIDS are victim to but some of the many challenges affecting the African and developing world's work force. In building an African Resource Center and Library in a war zone in Gulu, Northern Uganda, TLC has demonstrated a concrete way that nongovernmental organizations in partnership with all sectors can secure education and opportunity leading to economic security for children.

5. What is needed next is to form a national development policy that is inclusive of the needs, ideas, leadership, and creativity of the local communities that can utilize education and business resources on hand as the first steps towards reaching full employment of the local populace. To Love Children's African Resource Center and Library will include but not be limited to, the following components as requirements for a sustainable educational program that leads to economic opportunity:

1. Practical skills of education and economic sustainable development in addition to academic work.

2. Health and nutrition prevention education.

3. Maintenance of a school's infrastructure based on local available resources.

4. Education on self-sustainability of the environment as the key for maintaining sustainable education and sustainable employment.

5. Collaborative teaching techniques, critical thinking, problem solving practice, along with skills that will be required in the 21st century in order for students to be able to compete globally, and ensure that all children learn tolerance and ethics.

6. A technological infrastructure based on wind and solar power as well as other power sources.

6. Important Questions the World Needs to Consider

1. What economic achievements should a child-centered education target?

2. What role should schools play in order to create a stable economic world?

7. Recommendations for Africa and the developing world in the 21st century

1. Initiatives that are child-centered, inclusive of girl children, and sustainable are the foundation upon which all other economic and social policy needs to build.

2. Take better advantage of the qualitative and quantitative approach to monitor and evaluate policies and interventions already in place.

3. Reach the Millennium Development Goal for universal education that will translate to all children in attaining full employment.

4. A school to work program that allows for vocational education, technical training, scientific literacy, and allowing for both baccalaureate and post graduate studies is essential.

8. Presently, To Love Children is: Assisting local communities in Uganda to support and complement the government's effort to evolve policies and programs in order to reduce unemployment and underemployment amongst HIV/AIDS positive children and girls (women). Promoting productive employment ideas in all sectors of the economy with a Micro Credit finance program called WOMEN that contributes to the acceleration of economic and social development and the reduction of the incidence of poverty.

Summary

9. To Love Children's mission is to create sustainable educational development opportunities for the girl child in the developing world in order to break the cycle of poverty and we stand ready to provide our expertise and resources with any non-governmental, government or intergovernmental organization to bring into the lives of the marginalized children a sustainable educational policy that leads to economic opportunity.

10. External and environmental factors in northern Uganda, as well as many other African nations, have prevented economic expansion, investment and development due to uncertain variables in the social and economic climate. A pandemic of HIV/AIDS, malaria, drought, lack of accessible clean water and ongoing local wars spilling over neighbors' borders have made external aid simply a requisite policy for economic independence. Therefore, initiatives that are child-centered (with inclusion of the female child) are the foundation that economic and social policy can use to create full employment and decent work for all.

11. Integrated policy which is sensitive to local cultural and economic requirements through educational institutions such as The Future Victory School – Uganda and the proposed To Love Children African Resource Center and Library takes a qualitative and quantitative approach to monitor and evaluate the African nation's policy already in place to reach the Millennium Development Goals. Basic or secondary education alone will not meet the intent of this commission's theme of providing decent work for all. A school-to-work program that allows for vocational education and technical and scientific literacy is a step in the right direction for creating sustainable development in developing countries. By integrating private, governmental, INGO and NGO support with existent policy and goals we can surely complete this efficacious transition.

12. To Love Children will publish in the early part of 2008 its Healthy and Smart, a HIV/AIDS Prevention Curriculum for youth as another educational component to ensure a healthy workforce in Uganda and elsewhere in Africa. Each nation is invited in partnering and investing in the distribution to ensure the next generation of African youth and youth elsewhere in the developing world enters the work force healthy and smart.

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Statement submitted by UNANIMA International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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07-61228 (E) 121207

Statement

1. On the occasion of this 46th session of the Commission on Social Development, relevant to the priority theme of **Full Employment and Decent Work for All,** the NGOs endorsing this statement emphasize that Women play a vitally important role in economic growth and the reduction of poverty worldwide. When women have greater access to financial resources they are more likely to make decisions benefiting their households in terms of improved nutrition, education, and health — all reflected in the MDGs. We see the major contributions that women can make in poverty reduction in the microfinance movement which has emerged over the last few decades and grants women access to credit markets through small loans. It has helped poor women smooth consumption and increase income-generating activities to improve the quality of life for themselves and their households.

2. However, gender discrimination in labor markets, lack of meaningful employment — particularly in the formal sector — minimal opportunities and few development resources focused on women persist worldwide. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), 70% of the world's 1.3 billion absolute poor are women.[1] Women are too often shut out from working in the formal economy, which generally provides higher incomes, improved working conditions, regulations and social security. In developing countries, women represent over 60% of workers in the informal economy outside the agricultural sector.[2] Even when women do obtain employment in formal sectors of the economy, they earn 20 to 30% less worldwide than their male counterparts.[3]

Lack of real employment opportunities drives the migration of labor. Women represent a rising percentage of those who leave their countries in search of work contributing to a major "brain drain" in countries of origin. The migration of women divides families and those remaining behind become reliant on remittances, which are often subject to high taxation in origin and destination countries.

3. Women migrants are particularly vulnerable to exploitation. One stark example of this is human trafficking, in which over 700,000 women and children are victims of trafficking each year for sexual exploitation and forced labor according to the UNODC.

4. Besides the inadequate international and domestic gender-focused development resources, one chief contributing factor to the lack of meaningful employment opportunities is that women frequently have little organized voice in politics and policymaking and, hence, in how resources are best allocated to improve income-generating activities and improve overall societal welfare and equality. We offer several positive examples in this area which the international community should examine replicating elsewhere in environmentally-specific contexts. For example in Burkina Faso, the ILO and the Danish Development Agency have recently helped design a Social Providence Fund for Informal Economy Workers that will extend social coverage for health care to workers who are currently

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[1] International Labour Organization. "Gender Promotion Programme (GENPROM)", http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/gems/about/index.htm, Accessed 07 November 2007.

[2] International Labour Organization. *Women and Men in the Informal Economy: A Statistical Picture.* (Geneva: International Labour Organization-Employment Sector, 2002), 6

[3] International Labour Organization "Gender Promotion Programme (GENPROM)", http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/gems/about/index.htm, Accessed 07 November 2007.

organizing to form a union in the informal sector.[4] In 1972 in India, the Self Employed Women's Association in India was registered as a trade union and its membership now stands at nearly 960,000. SEWA strives for the "idea that the self-employed, like salaried employees, have a right to their wages, decent working conditions and protective labor laws".[5] Rwanda has made significant progress in women's participation in political life through the implementation of affirmative action. The outcome can be seen through facts such as that 30% of decision-making related positions are now assigned to women.[6]

5. Our own NGOs have been working to provide quality education for more women particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, while at the same time promoting public-private partnerships which enhance the possibility for these women to work in the formal sector. We are also concerned with the increasingly higher rate of HIV infection particularly for young women and ask that governments everywhere in the world pay attention to the links between decent work for women, women's empowerment and education to bring about a lowering of this rate.

6. We recognize and applaud the efforts of the international community to focus more attention on increasing and enhancing the resources used towards development geared towards gender equality. This is reflected in the theme for the 52nd session of CSW, "Financing for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women" as well as the 2008 Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus in Qatar, and the 46th session of the Commission on Social Development, "Promoting Full Employment and Decent Work for All". However, this is not enough and these issues must continually remain on the international community's agenda. Governments and NGOs need to find ways to collaborate with one another, with international and regional organizations, and with workers and their organizations, to create and implement changes that generate employment. Creating sustainable, productive employment opportunities for women and strengthening institutions, policy and legal frameworks that increase gender equality should be key priorities for the international community and all governments.

7. Recommendations

We recommend:

1. ***Increase resources for gender-focused development and employment generation-*** **Committing more and predictable funding flows that specifically focus on creating and improving employment for women, including assistance to design and implement policies to attract investment that creates long-term, sustainable jobs and to create an environment where women workers, entrepreneurs, cooperatives, and collectives can thrive will yield great positive benefits.**

2. ***Focus on macro, in addition to micro-level, gender-inclusive economic policies-*** **The inability for women in poverty to access financial services is a major barrier for women**

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[4] International Labor Organization. "Women in the workplace: New ILO report highlights how action in the world of work can help reduce maternal deaths." http://www.ilo.org/global/About_the_ILO/Media_and_public_information/Feature_stories/lang--en/WCMS_084620/index.htm, Accessed 16 October 2007.

[5] UNESCO Management of Social Transformations (MOST) Programme "A Women's Self-help Organization for Poverty Alleviation in India: SEWA India, http://www.unesco.org/most/asia1.htm, Accessed 7 November 2007

[6] Social Watch. *In Dignity and Rights: Making the Universal Right to Social Security a Reality.* (Montevideo: Third World Institute, 2007) 87.

to create, maintain and expand their small or micro-businesses. While microfinance services such as small loans are important tools to help smooth income levels and help generate revenue, and resources for such activities should be increased, microfinance is not a substitute for macro-level institutional and policy changes focused on women and creating greater employment opportunities in the formal sector.

3. ***Allocate more funding and implement policies to improve education for women*-Improving access and the quality of education for women and girls is a fundamental necessity for enabling women to seek and maintain employment. Educational opportunities such as vocational training, as well as expanding and strengthening basic education will allow women to compete in labor markets developing a more productive, literate and educated workforce which helps attract job-creating investment.**

4. ***Empower women through increased participation at all levels*-It is essential that space be provided to empower women to participate in all aspects of public life to help reduce the discrimination women face in securing work and in the workplace itself. Mechanisms such as affirmative action policies and quotas enable women to have a voice in the decisions that affect them. We urge the implementation of mechanisms to "formalize" the work of self-employed women by supporting and expanding organizing efforts through trade unions, associations, cooperatives, and self-help groups.**

5. ***Enhance mechanisms to combat the exploitation of women migrants*-Women migrants must enjoy the same rights and protections as all other citizens of a country, regardless of their movement within or across national boundaries. However when human traffickers and other exploiters/clients prey on women and girls, we call on governments and the international community to implement stiff penalties against those who exploit women, ensuring adequate protection and providing services to victims, and working to end the demand for such exploitation.**

Note: Statement endorsed and supported by the following non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council: Company of the Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul, Dominican Leadership Conference, Elizabeth Seton Federation, International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation, Pax Romana, Salesian Missions, School Sisters of Notre Dame, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur and VIVAT International.

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Statement submitted by Global Youth Action Network, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Statement

Introduction

1. In today's labour market, young people represent approximately 25% of the global workforce, yet 43.7% of the world's unemployed.[1] Those employed find that jobs available to youth are low paid, insecure, and with few benefits or prospects for advancement.[2] These conditions severely limit global poverty reduction and threaten to waste the potential of the largest, most educated and most connected generation of young people the world has ever known.

2. The Global Youth Action Network conducted an electronic consultation with its member organizations on the state of youth employment, involving more than a hundred young representatives of youth organizations from thirty-four countries, in both English and French.[3] Their summarized ideas and suggestions on promoting employment and decent work follow, and we urge Governments to integrate the recommendations in the development of national action plans on employment.

Education and Training

3. Participants are not naïve in their appraisal of their educational systems and recognize that employment opportunities are linked to macroeconomic realities. A participant from Bangladesh commented that *"Educational systems can't remove [the] unemployment problem. Where there is a shortage of jobs then what can the educational system do?"* Still, participants feel that a more flexible education system with more focus on practical, relevant skills would better prepare students for their entrance into the work force.

4. Participants recommend that government and private institutions improve their effectiveness by matching education and training to opportunities within the current and future job markets. This demands greater research and understanding, and should also include entrepreneurial possibilities. In the words of a participant from Nigeria: "*The schools can improve the transition from school to work through comprehensive training and research program on the current job market in producing worthy candidates for the current job targets.*"

5. Many participants request greater support of youth entrepreneurship, and increased access to existing micro-credit programs. From Ghana, a participant states *"Job creating should not be the sole responsibility of government ...the government's responsibility in job creation is to create an enabling environment and structure that facilitate and support entrepreneurship development."*

6. Finally, many participants would like a flexible approach in which apprenticeships, internships, and job placement opportunities are more frequently incorporated into the educational system. Improving the links between students and employers can greatly smooth the transition from

[1] International Labour Organization, Global Employment Trends for youth, 2006.
[2] Youth Employment Network, 2006
[3] For a full archive of messages and a list of participants, please visit: http://groups.takingitglobal.org/gyanemployment and http://groups.takingitglobal.org/GYANemploi.

school to work. At the very least, participants asked that their governments provide young people with useful and accurate information about the current job market, including the informal sector.

National Policies

7. Participants indicate that their countries have national programs to encourage youth employment, and that many of these have done some good. However, a participant from the Congo reported that *"It's not by a lack of methods in African countries but a lack of the practical implementation of these methods."* They were concerned that most young people had no idea such programs existed and wanted to see greater publicity of these programs so that more young people can participate and hold those involved accountable to successful implementation.

8. During the 45th session of the Commission for Social Development, many discussed the exciting possibilities of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). These possibilities can only by realized with serious investment and coordinated government support. Participants would like to see their governments invest in cheaper, faster, and more widespread internet access. Many mentioned the possibilities of internet access to connect people and spread information. A participant from Cameroon noted: *"We need also and not at least a complete and free access to the internet in order to learn from others and establish partnership with international non governmental organizations."*

9. Recommendations

Considering the suggestions of the youth consultation we recommend:

1. **More skills training – The educational system should to a larger extent include the choice of skills and vocational training, and should be better matched with current and future employment opportunities.**

2. **Support for youth entrepreneurship - National action plans and educational systems should promote youth entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial skills. Young people need increased access and reduced barriers to micro-credit programs.**

3. **Employment preparation - There should be more and better preparation for the transition from education to employment, including a greater integration of internships, apprenticeships, and job placement opportunities in the educational system. Youth need to be given realistic and accurate information about their current national job market, including the informal sector.**

4. **Implementation and awareness of existing programs - National programs for promoting youth employment should be expanded, and involve youth in the planning. Current programs need to be better publicized to increase access and accountability.**

5. **Increased access to Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) - Governments should invest in increased access to ICTs for young people, including higher transmission speeds, broader geographic access and lower costs.**

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Statement submitted by the Fundación Antonio Núñez Jiménez de la Naturaleza y el Hombre (Antonio Núñez Jiménez Foundation for Nature and Humanity), a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

1. The achievement of a "culture of nature" in which human beings are the main beneficiaries and agents of social change, building a sustainable, rational and forward-looking world, was a guiding idea of Dr. Antonio Núñez Jiménez when he founded our organization in 1994.

2. Our Foundation is committed to helping Cuban society and the world solve environmental problems by integrating socio-cultural dimensions and has had a holistic view of how to address these social problems since its inception, as is evident from the thoughts of its founder: "We have come into being to fight for ecological values, to improve the health of the planet, which is sick from pollution (...) And we have also come into being to combat the contamination of humanity and the political disasters that in many places aim to make humanity a pariah in a third-rate world (...) We are fighting, in short, for humanity to thrive in a healthy environment."

3. The thematic area before us is another example of how difficult it is these days to consider this issue in isolation. It has been identified and placed on the political agenda of States by the International Labour Organization (ILO), which sets out the absolute need for "decent work" for all without linking this to analysis, scrutiny or a critical view of the prevailing policies at the macro and international levels in a

* E/CN.5/2008/1.

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neo-liberal globalized world. It is necessary to identify the adverse and restrictive impact of these policies, which tend to negate the possibility of access to "decent work" for ordinary citizens.

4. Sustainable development, social justice and decent employment are issues which actors from the trade union movement and civil society in Latin America and the Caribbean have drawn attention to because they are closely interlinked. Another noted cross-cutting issue involves upholding the principle of equality, which is commonly violated in the area of employment access, tenure and promotion owing to thousand year-old and latent prejudices still underpinned by sexism, racism or phobias based on ethnic origin, nationality or sexual orientation. Such prejudices are rooted in a "anti-nature culture", which is violent and essentially unsustainable for human development in the twenty-first century.

5. Designing policies, strategies and programmes aimed at ensuring access to "decent work" initially requires comprehensive measures which guarantee access to decent education. Moreover, this is possible only when people enjoy the right of universal access to primary health-care services, which treat curable diseases and allow people to live healthy lives. Only in this way, by building a socio-political climate devoid of egoism, which is the main ethical reason for the ecological and environmental disasters upon us, can we then gain time to create the better world that we want: a world where there are equal opportunities to develop the full potential of the human intellect for the benefit of our peoples and societies. This is our view of how the paradigm of access to "decent work" can be based on more equitable and far less disparate realities than today.

6. The Antonio Núñez Jiménez Foundation for Nature and Humanity has a vision which aims to build a society where love and respect for nature are an intrinsic part of national identity at the local level, a vision which is respectful and cognizant of the responsibility that we have on a global scale as part of the planet as a whole. It has been involved in Cuba's overall efforts to create a more just, compassionate and worthy society for all, drawing upon a still imperfect social reality, a society that in its everyday work has moved from underdevelopment and is building development strategies and programmes that have achieved first-world standards.

7. Since the triumph of the Revolution, the much-criticized logic of "growth first, distribution later" has never prevailed in the design and implementation of our economic development strategies, not even in the most difficult times when many were betting that our social project would disintegrate following the demise of the socialist camp in Eastern Europe.

8. Even in the worst years of the "Special Period" following the collapse of the socialist camp, a time when the economic, financial and trade embargo imposed by the Government of the United States of America was stepped up, the right to work remained a central objective. This was the case during the arduous and complex process of working out how to downsize the Cuban economy in order to salvage and ensure the survival and very existence of our political model with the least possible impact on the social progress that had been successfully consolidated and that we all, as a people, enjoyed.

9. In addressing this subject, we also believe that there is an important need to further analyse the impact of the environmental factors which influence indicators for the attainment of decent work. Owing to underdevelopment or limited access to

cleaner production technologies, our countries continue to see human health being affected by polluted environments, a lack of job security and so forth.

10. Taking advantage of the framework provided by the commendable ideas of ILO and its call for our participation today as members of civil society, the Foundation would like to state that all the efforts that we are carrying out today in Cuba as an NGO — in conjunction with the various other civil society organizations in our country, and in their dual capacities as direct actors and beneficiaries providing support for programmes to achieve the strategies and programmes of action of the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development, the Rio Earth Summit and the Millennium Development Goals — are taking place in subhuman conditions since ours is the only country in the world whose people have been victimized for more than four decades by an economic war waged unilaterally and extraterritorially by a foreign Power — the United States of America.

11. Whatever efforts we make in our society today in Cuba, the situation continues to be characterized by this genocidal reality. However, our capacity to grow stronger and to look to the future is a legacy rooted in our historical memory, and we therefore wish to share common experiences and dreams in this social dialogue for a viable and dignified future.

12. The need to contribute to building a better world in this context, acting and drawing upon the rich and diverse knowledge that international civil society has accumulated with respect to thematic areas firmly on the political agenda of the Commission on Social Development, is a new challenge for the Foundation in its new capacity as an NGO in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council. This is a necessary apprenticeship, an acknowledgement of decade-long efforts and, above all, a commitment to the internal work carried out in our country to broaden and deepen the development of an extensive environmental culture, one where social issues and the development of our cultural values show the best contribution that human beings can make towards developing all aspects of our societies: cultural, scientific, social and economic.

13. We reaffirm our ethical commitment to building a culture of nature without poverty, illiteracy and unsanitary conditions based on the principle of respect for the full dignity of men and women. These are prerequisites conducive for socializing, constructing and consolidating a common vision of "decent work" as an effective and sustainable paradigm.

14. In the words of our national hero José Martí: "In this world there is only one inferior race: belonging to it are those who consult their own interests before all else, whether it be for their vanity, pride or material welfare. Likewise, there is only one superior race: belonging to it are those who consult the human interest before all else".[1]

[1] Mario A. Batista Zaldivar and Miguel A. Pupo Chacón. "You can live in Ecopoli". Year 12. No. 32, 2005. Quarterly journal published by the Antonio Núñez Jiménez Foundation for Nature and Humanity. Habana, Cuba. Page 25.

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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: promoting full employment and decent work for all

Statement submitted by the Organisation mondiale des associations pour l'education prénatale, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.5/2008/1.

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Statement

Prenatal education, which is aimed at preventing any physical and mental disorders as well as being vital to health and a factor for peace, is a priority requirement in modern societies.

1. The goal of the Organisation mondiale des associations pour l'education prénatale, which has 17 associations in four continents, is to promote prenatal education worldwide. It carries out scientific studies that show how important it is for parents to stay positive and adopt a healthy lifestyle during the prenatal period, since that makes for healthy, mentally well-balanced and intelligent children.

2. Indeed, scientific and genetic research has showed that the foundations of human health, mental balance and intelligence are laid during the prenatal period. The physical and psychological well-being and health of the parents-to-be determine the social behaviour of the unborn child and future adult. It is therefore vital for future generations that future parents should be informed of this causal relationship by learning good parenting skills so that they provide the best possible environment for their children to develop, for the betterment of their future family and society as a whole.

3. Accordingly, prenatal education is the best way to prevent any physical and mental disorders in children and future adults, including aggressive behaviour and violence, because it is only by being at peace with ourselves that we are able to spread peace throughout the world. This ability to create peace within ourselves is nurtured during the prenatal period. Future parents can encode in the unborn child happiness, the ability to love, to engage in dialogue, cooperate and find equitable solutions to any conflict.

4. According to the American biologist and geneticist, Bruce Lipton, future parents are the "genetic engineers of their children". They can foster a healthy and peaceful society.

5. Prenatal education for the future parents, especially the mother, basically involves:

   1. A healthy lifestyle (nutrition and healthy lifestyle in accordance with WHO guidelines);

   2. A healthy, positive outlook on life (music and art appreciation, revelling in the beauty of nature, while respecting the culture of each country and individual);

   3. And, most importantly, communicating love between the mother, father and child (through caresses, haptonomy, speech and thoughts). According to Dr. Thomas Verny, this protective shield of love alleviates any day to day irritations.

6. Prenatal education and general awareness raising in that regard will have the following benefits:

1. Improved public health worldwide, including improvement in the physical and mental health of future generations and a decline in high-risk pregnancies, premature births and abortions;

2. A drop in violence and crime;

3. A healthier population and economic growth owing to the decline in handicaps, disorders, crime and improved efficiency of a considerable portion of the population;

4. Make young people better parents.

Each child is entitled to receive as a fundamental birth right from its parents a healthy and happy environment.

7. We propose that:

1. Prenatal education should be included as a fundamental right of every human being – from the moment of conception – in the Convention on the Rights of the Child;

2. This key subject, concerning the very essence of the human being, should be discussed as a topic in all the forums and sessions of the United Nations and its Member States devoted to health, the youth, children, women and the family.

3. Prenatal education should be included in the health and education programmes of all States Members of the United Nations.

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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: promoting full employment and decent work for all

Statement submitted by Droit à l'énergie SOS futur, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.5/2008/1.

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Statement

1. Ensuring full employment and decent work for all is the best way for a country or region to escape the vicious cycle of poverty and achieve the goal of eradicating extreme poverty to which the States Members of the United Nations committed themselves in 2000. But this goal, noble as it is, will remain wishful thinking unless those States decide to back up their commitment with concrete steps, including one step that we view as an essential priority: ensuring access to energy and, more specifically, electricity.

It is certainly possible to live without electricity, as our forebears demonstrated. However, choosing to do so would amount to a complete negation of the Millennium Development Goals. Without energy, it is difficult, if not impossible, to fulfil the requirements of a decent standard of living: education, food, health, hygiene, access to potable water, sanitation and telecommunications, and so on.

2. In order to ensure economic development, a country needs an adequate energy base to establish and operate its basic infrastructure. A number of countries regarded as emerging economies lack such an energy base, which has relegated their populations to conditions of poverty, as indicated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) human development statistics. In such countries, universal access to energy or an increase in energy coverage stimulates decentralized economic activity and hence employment, in particular productive employment. The effects are many and diverse.

3. The development of economic activity resulting from the electrification of a region immediately generates employment in small businesses or local crafts. This often releases women and children from the tasks of seeking firewood and water supplies. More time is then available for other economic activities or, in the case of children, education, which will eventually facilitate access to work. Employment created in the energy production sector itself, particularly the electricity sector, contributes to the technological development of the countries and regions concerned through the technical expertise and know-how required for these sectors. If electrification is accompanied by intelligent transfer of technology, with companies providing the training necessary for absorbing that technology, this will create local expertise in that field.

4. The establishment of public-private partnerships, which we advocate, with endorsement of companies in exchange for ethical undertakings, is a win-win situation for employment. It creates activity and skilled jobs in emerging economies, while also allowing companies in industrialized countries to benefit, as a result, from an upsurge in their activity and hence in employment.

Finally, electrification of a geographical area contributes to reducing not only international but also domestic migratory flows. By encouraging local development, it reduces migration from rural to urban or peri-urban areas that are rife with violence and unemployment. Universal access to energy is an effective and peaceful way of encouraging populations to settle in their regions of origin.

The impact of electrification is felt in a number of ways: it reduces pressure on large urban areas, while ensuring that people settle in natural employment areas. It

also has a positive impact on efforts to combat climate change and greenhouse gas emissions through a proactive policy of access to and control of energy use.

5. Droit à l'énergie, with a network of 700 organizations in 70 countries comprising over 60 million people, proposes to make universal access to energy an essential requirement and has drafted an action plan to that end. It focuses on three areas: the Millennium Development Goals, public-private partnerships and active involvement of civil society at all stages of development.